PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

HABITATS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Passive Management

Description

Passive management means that no or very limited direct action is taken to maintain or change the structure, composition, or other attributes of a habitat or natural community at a site. Passive management should not be interpreted as neglect or indifference; nor does it imply that the site will never change. Rather, it is the result of a conscious management decision to not actively manipulate vegetation or other attributes, instead allowing natural processes to respond to conditions and largely determine the composition and structure of the habitat or natural community. These natural processes include plant succession, competition, plant aging and decay, structural development, wildlife and insect activity, windstorms, fires, flooding, and climate change.

Passive management often is applied to sites that:

- Have rare, unique, or fragile communities (e.g., cliff communities; springs; groves of old trees; cultural sites, etc.).
- Are too small for management activities to be conducted efficiently or cost-effectively.
- Are isolated or difficult to reach (e.g., islands).
- Host habitats or communities that are good to excellent quality and are stable, thus requiring little or no intervention.
- Host habitats that are poor quality but stable, such as a reed canary grass infestation in a disturbed wetland of such size or complexity that the tools and/or resources required for restoration are not currently available.

It is fairly common for some limited active management to be applied to primarily passively managed sites for specific purposes. In these cases, natural processes are still the main determinants of composition and structure. Examples include non-native invasive species control, response to catastrophic events (timber salvage after severe disease/pest outbreaks or storm damage), timber stand improvement practices that hasten development of old-growth characteristics, hydrologic restoration, prescribed fire, and installation of artificial nest structures. This type of approach seeks to promote stable and productive natural communities while minimizing the need for unnecessary and potentially expensive human intervention.

Considerations

- Passive management requires an understanding of the effects of natural processes and the impacts human activities both within the site and in the surrounding landscape.
- Passively managed sites will still require monitoring.

- Passively managed sites will change as a result of natural process and past and present human activities (e.g., fire control, wildlife population management, introduction of non-native invasive species, recreational uses, etc.), though changes and impacts will be different than in actively managed sites.